

# Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Sport Clubs - A Conceptual Framework

Julia Albrecht, Christoffer Klenk & Siegfried Nagel  
Institute of Sport Science, University of Bern

## Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) asks that people with disabilities participate on an equal basis in sport and physical activity (Art. 30). However, there is a systemic separation between specific disability sport and regular sport in the organized sport setting in terms of autonomous disability sport clubs and regular sport clubs. Associated with this, athletes with disabilities are clearly underrepresented in the organized sport setting, especially in regular sport clubs (e.g. Ullenhag et al., 2012). This implies that there are various barriers to sport participation on different levels (e.g. Shields & Synnot, 2014), for example difficulties with accessibility and transport (Jaarsma et al., 2014). Hence, an important aim of studies should be to analyze the conditions on the organizational level of sport clubs and training groups that are conducive for an equal participation of persons with disabilities in sport clubs.



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## Theoretical framework

A multilevel model (fig. 1) is used to explain the conditions for participation in sport clubs at three levels – the member level, the organizational level and the club's environmental context.

Focusing on the organizational level, the club culture (e.g. attitudes, knowledge), formal structures (e.g. sport facilities, resources, co-operations) and established practices (e.g. conveyed contents of training sessions, social interactions) on both the club and the training group level is crucial (cf. Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

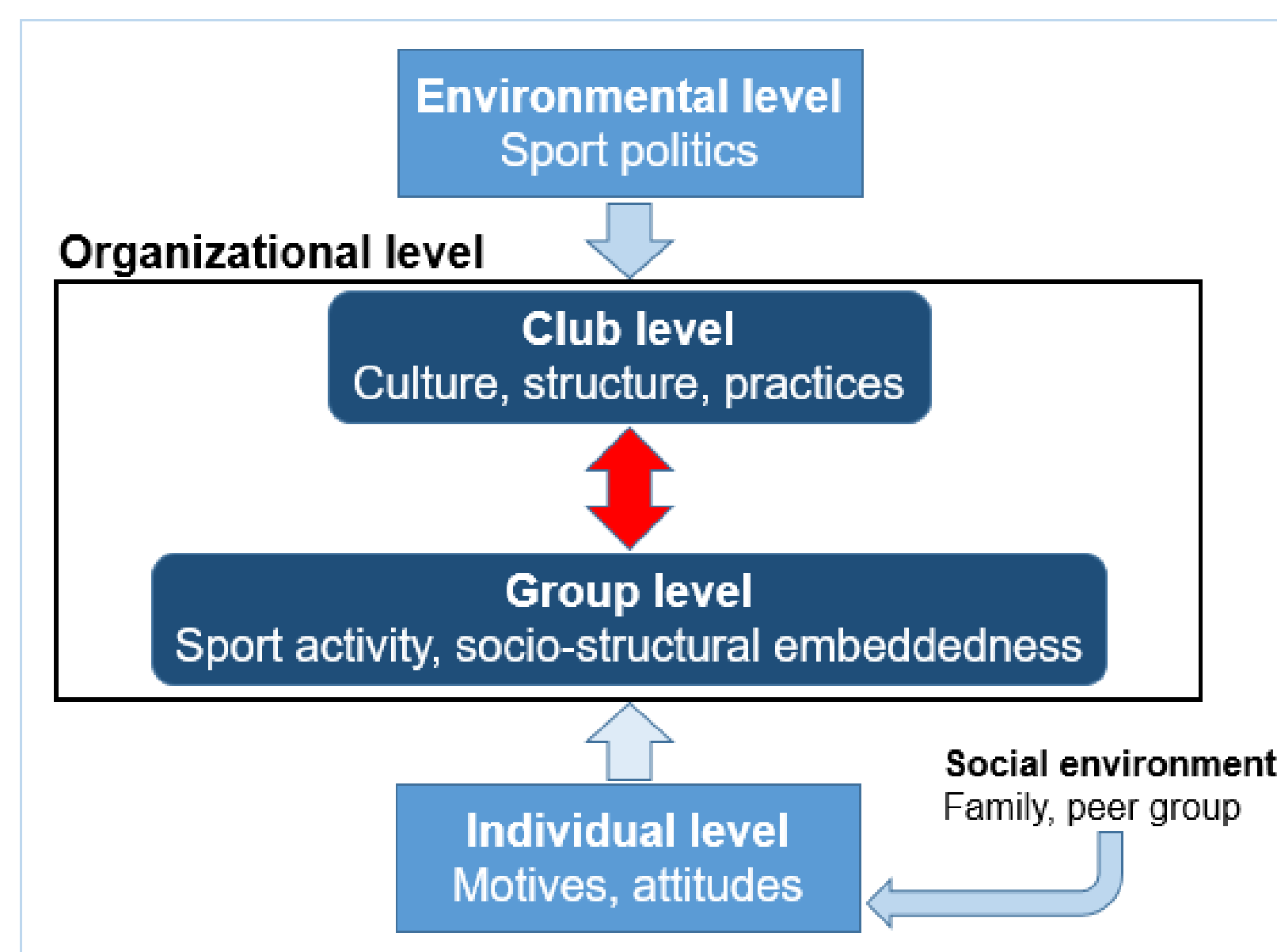


Fig 1.: Heuristic multilevel model for the analysis of inclusive processes in the organized setting of sport

When this model is applied to either sample or case studies, a differentiation of specific types of clubs should be taken into account because sport participation of people with disabilities takes place within three different settings (fig. 2): Disability sport groups/clubs with only persons with disabilities as members (separation), clubs with a special group for them or mixed groups where the members have to adapt to the common rules and structure (integration) and groups where members, both with and without disabilities, practice together in one group with adapted rules and structures (inclusion).

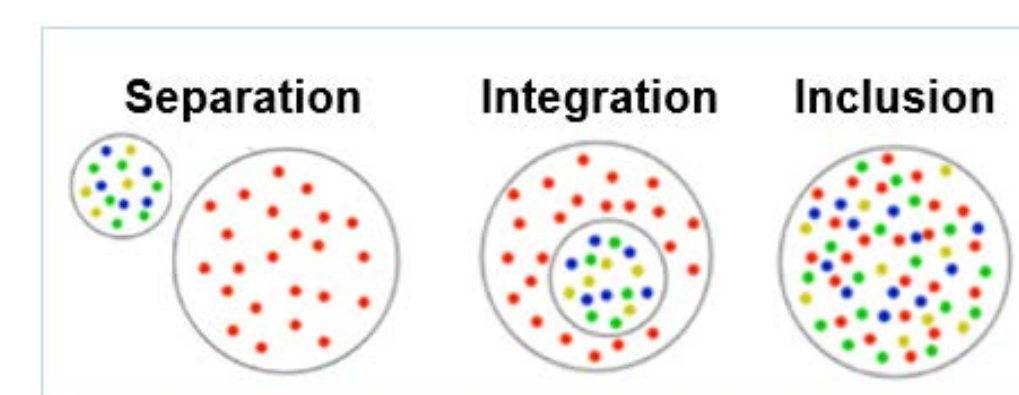


Fig. 2: Organizational settings

## Research questions

Based on the multilevel model (fig. 1) the following questions concerning the structural conditions for the participation of people with disabilities in sport clubs can be derived:

- What kind of culture regarding the participation of persons with disabilities does exist in sport clubs?
- Which formal structural conditions are conducive for the participation of persons with disabilities in the organized sports setting?
- Which common practices concerning the participation of people with disabilities can be observed in sport clubs?
- What culture-, structure and practice-related factors are conducive or obstructive for the participation of persons with disabilities in sport clubs?
- What are the characteristic features, similarities and differences of different sport settings (separated vs. integrative/inclusive)?

## Methodical approach

To deal with the topic we suggest a mixed method approach for either sample or case study designs which means a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods. Training groups in sport clubs should be recruited theory-based according to the setting (separative and integrative/inclusive; see also fig. 2).

Following the theoretical framework (fig. 1), analysis should be conducted on the training group level as well as on the member level with different instruments (fig. 3).

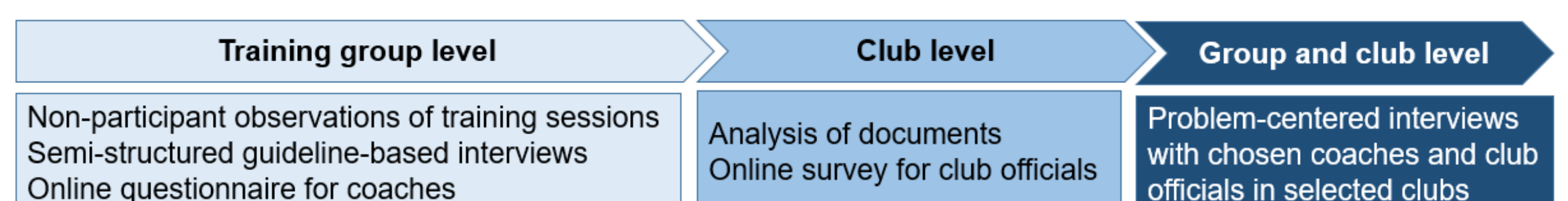


Fig. 3: Suggested instruments for conducting a study to deal with this topic

## Summary and outlook

On the basis of the analysis of different settings, best-practice examples can be given as well as supportive measures to change and adapt structures for increasing and enhancing sport participation of people with disabilities in sport clubs can be designed.

## References

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